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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 000867

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FOR NEA/ELA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [KDEM](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: HAWKS REPORTEDLY WIN JORDANIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD
SHURA COUNCIL ELECTIONS

REF: AMMAN 693

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d)

Summary

1. (C) Muslim Brotherhood (MB) hawks have reportedly won a majority in the new MB Shura Council following internal elections. Speculation now turns to who will hold the position of MB Controller General, the top spot in the MB. Despite continuing internal fissures, the new council will work hard to show a public face of unity. A more hawkish council will also reassess its relations with the government and royal court, while trying to rebuild its popularity in Jordanian society by playing on hot-button and emotionally charged local and regional issues. End summary.

Hawks Win Shura Council Supremacy

2. (C) Although there has been no official announcement of results by the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood (MB), reports indicate that the hawkish faction of the Brotherhood won Shura Council elections held from mid-February to mid-March throughout the MB branches in Jordan. According to media reports, the hawks won 25 seats of the 42 contested, besting the total of 14 seats won by the so-called doves. While these totals are not final or official, sources have told media outlets that the hawks' victory was decisive. Note: Most observers draw these analytical distinctions of hawks and doves, but GOJ officials have told Embosffs that, in considering the threat posed by the movement and its long-term intentions, they do not see a material difference in the two wings and that any distinction is cosmetic. Post agrees. End note. Election results in some MB branches are being contested, including in the Hussein Branch within Amman, from where Zaki Bani Irsheid, Secretary General of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) and leading hawk, won a seat on the council.

Next Steps

3. (C) The newly elected Shura Council is expected to convene within two weeks to elect five observers to the council, likely to also be hawks. Following that step, the Shura Council will look to implement a by-law stipulating the separation of the posts of MB Controller General and Chairman of the Shura Council. Barring a deal between hawks and doves, the hawks are expected to seek to remove current Controller General (and dove) Salim Al-Falahat, from his position. Note: Hawks blame Falahat and the dovish wing of the party for making the wrong decision in choosing to have the IAF take part in municipal and parliamentary elections in

2007, and in selecting a dovish IAF candidate list that was soundly defeated in the parliamentary polls. End note. As a way to remove Falahat from the Controller General position, speculation is that the hawks could offer him the position of Chairman of the Shura Council - if those two positions are no longer held by one official - as a face-saving move for this respected senior member of the MB. Speculation on a new Controller General has focused on Bani Irsheid, who has indicated his desire to also hold onto the leadership of the IAF. Falahat could retain the position, in a unity deal between the hawks and doves.

Publicly United, But Fissures Remain

14. (C) As expected, the Islamic movement is trying to present a united public face following a polarizing Shura Council election. Falahat has played his part in these efforts, telling daily newspaper Al-Ghad that though he was "not denying these differences" (between doves and hawks), they were too small to matter. He argued that the "methodology of the group in terms of change, development, and reform is largely fixed, whatever the leadership." Simultaneously, press sources revived the story on the prospect of Bani Irsheid facing an internal MB disciplinary hearing - or "internal trial" as it labeled - with the reports claiming that he still faces a hearing for not supporting and campaigning for the IAF's moderate-laden candidate list in parliamentary elections. Likewise, some MB members are also still clamoring for MB member and Senator Abdal-Majid Dhunaybat to resign from the Senate, a step that would be difficult to take as it would further diminish the MB's much-reduced presence in the parliament.

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Comment

15. (C) A Shura Council majority being won by hawks was expected, but the council remains divided (reftel). The hawks will not have a blank check. They will have to work with the doves, who hold a sizeable number of seats and who remain respected leaders in the Islamic movement. More importantly, the new Shura Council will face a serious internal challenge in figuring out how a hawkish council can continue the decades-old accommodation between the Islamic movement, government and royal court. Until now, the Islamists have seen it as to their benefit to remain part of the system and not cross redlines that would force a serious showdown with, and reaction from, the government. That said, hot-button and emotionally charged local and regional issues such as the Gaza crisis, public perceptions of failure in Israeli-Palestinian peace making, and rising food and fuel prices in Jordan will continue to give the MB and IAF rhetorical ammunition to keep up its verbal attacks against the government, the U.S., and Israel. The Islamic movement will use these issues to try to restore their weakened position in Jordanian society (reftel).

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